

COLD and FLU FACT SHEET

A. Spread of colds and flu

1. Colds and flu are spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes. The droplets in a cough or sneeze of an infected person travel through the air and reach the mouth or nose of people nearby.
2. Colds and flu may be spread when a person touches droplets, nose drainage or saliva from an infected person or a soiled object and then touches his/her own nose, mouth or eyes.

B. Prevention of colds and flu

1. WASH HANDS with soap and running water or a hand sanitizer

The single most important method to prevent illness is washing hands. (1)

- When?
 - before, during, and after preparing food
 - before eating
 - after using the bathroom
 - after sneezing or coughing into your hands
 - when hands are dirty
- How?
 - use soap and running water or a hand sanitizer. Rub hands vigorously for 15 – 20 seconds, about the length of time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.
 - wash ALL surfaces, including back of hands, wrists, between the fingers, under the nails
 - rinse well
 - dry hands well
 - turn faucet off with a paper towel, if away from home.
- Studies
 - One study involving Detroit school children showed that scheduled handwashing, at least four times a day, can reduce gastrointestinal illness and related absences by more than 50%. (2)
 - A case-control study of 6,080 school children showed that those who used classroom-dispensed, instant hand sanitizers at specific times during the day, in addition to normal hand cleaning habits, experienced 20% fewer absences due to illness.(3)

- A four-week handwashing program for a class of first grade students was associated with fewer absences and prescribed antibiotics than were reported the previous school year. (4)
2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze to help prevent spreading infected droplets. Dispose of tissue in the nearest waste receptacle after use.
 3. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth
 4. Avoid close contact with others who are sick.
 5. Avoid contact with others when you or your children are sick.
 6. Eat balanced meals, including plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
 6. Drink lots of water.

References:

- (1) CDC. An Ounce of Prevention Keeps the Germs Away.
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/op/handwashing.htm>.2000
- (2) Matser D, Longe SH, Dickson H. Scheduled hand washing in an elementary school population. Family Medicine. 1997;29(5):336-339
- (3) Hammond B, Ali Y, Fendler E, Dolan M, & Donovan S. Effect of hand sanitizer use on elementary school absenteeism. American Journal of Infection Control, 2000;28:340-346
- (4) Day R, St. Arnaud S, Monsma M. Effectiveness of a handwashing Program, Clinical Nursing Research. 1993;2(1):24-40

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www.cdc.gov/ncidod/op/handwashing.htm